



The Brandy Martell Project
Enhancing Engagement and Retention in
Quality HIV Care for Transgender
Women of Color

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Tri-City Health Center
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Disclaimer

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Presentation Outline

- Overview
- Capacity
- Implementation
- Lessons Learned
- Sustainability
- Recommendations
- Resources



Overview

TCHC TransVision Program

Goal: To develop and implement model interventions to improve engagement and retention in HIV care among transgender women of color living with HIV

- SPNS Transwomen of Color (TWOC) HIV Care Initiative funded in 2012
- Award Winning National/Internationally Recognized Program
- One of Alameda County's only community clinics serving trans/gender non-conforming individuals since 2002: Trans Affirming HIV Prevention/Care/Primary Care
- 9 demonstration sites nationwide, 3 in the SF Bay Area
- 450+ active clients



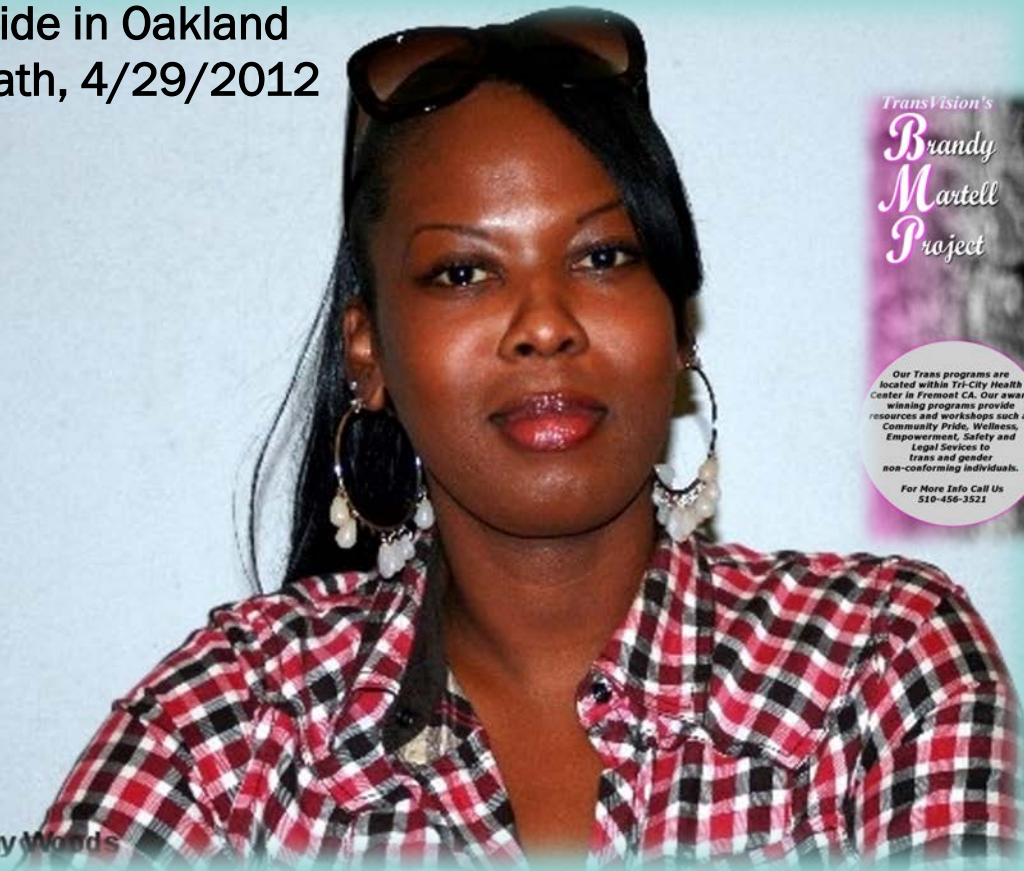
The Brandy Martell Project

- An intervention to re-engage and retain transwomen of color previously out of HIV care via workshop programming and a legal clinic
 - Transwomen of color are disproportionately impacted by HIV
 - have low HIV care engagement and low survival rates compared to other populations living with HIV
- TransVision's experience with clients falling out of care to meet their basic needs underscores the significance of implementing comprehensive programs
- Based on the Critical Race Theory (CRT) which provides a theoretical basis for understanding the issues of racialization, race consciousness, and social location with the intention to understand and eliminate health inequities.
 - We intended to address and eliminate structural barriers faced by transgender women while effectively improving their timely entry, engagement and retention in HIV primary care.

TRANSVISION Member

Brandy Martell

- Domestic violence survivor
- 43rd homicide in Oakland
- Shot to Death, 4/29/2012



Transvision's
*Brandy
Martell
Project*

Are You A Transwoman of Color?
There Are Things You Can Do To Take Care Of Yourself

Our Trans programs are located within Tri-City Health Center in Fremont CA. Our award winning programs provide resources and workshops such as Community Pride, Wellness, Empowerment, Safety and Legal Services to trans and gender non-conforming individuals.
For More Info Call Us
510-456-3521

Supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration



Intervention Model

- **Goal to enroll 45 participants into the Brandy Martell Project (BMP)**
 - Participants offered access to direct legal counsel and participation in the Living Real Workshop/Sessions series
- **BMP Eligibility Criteria**
 - Transgender women of color, AF-AM or Latina transgender woman
 - Assigned male at birth on birth certificate
 - Currently identifies as transgender, female, transfemale, transwoman
 - Self-identifies as non-white or mixed race/ethnicity
 - HIV positive
 - At least 18 years old
- **BMP Target Population**
 - Latina/AF-AM trans women living in Alameda County and neighboring counties
 - Existing AF-AM trans women clients of TCHC
 - Have dropped out of care or released from incarceration



BMP Components

Legal Services

- Oakland-based attorney served as project Legal Liaison
- Worked individually with clients to help navigate the court system/process in Alameda County
- Helped clients overcome existing legal structural barriers that prevent transgender women of color from staying consistently in HIV care and treatment services
- Conducted monthly legal clinic to help identify legal issues/barriers
- Conducted Know Your Rights and Expungement Sessions in the Living Real Curriculum
- One-on-one 30-60 minute counseling session with lawyer
- Follow-up legal sessions on a case-by-case basis
- Minimal Rate: \$50 per hour non-court rate, \$60 per hour in court rate



BMP Components

Living Real Workshops

- 5 track – 16 session workshop intended to tackle some common barriers/challenges to HIV care and assist clients in moving forward in their lives:
 - substance abuse, domestic violence, police harassment, unemployment, safer transition
- Empowerment sessions that facilitate community/personal pride were designed to increase:
 - community involvement, job skills, healthy family, personal relationships, personal development
- sessions are designed to build off of one another
- Participants received a \$50 gift card per session attendance and \$100 bonus for completing all 16 sessions plus graduation certificate



Capacity 1

Optimal capacity for successful implementation included:

- Existing programming
 - transgender staff/transgender specific programming
 - access to HIV prevention, care, & treatment services
 - access to affirming transgender primary care services, including HRT
 - successful history with transgender specific interventions that incorporate gender affirmation as key components of all services



Capacity 2

- By year four BMP was staffed by a Program Manager/Project Manager supervising five full time staff
 - All positions are Health Education Specialist and one certified Medical Assistant
- TransVision utilized full & part-time volunteer peer advocates (young transgender women of color)
 - primary responsibility was outreach, recruitment, and program assistance
 - they came with their own social networks and were trained in social network-based recruiting
- All Peer Advocates were promoted to Health Education Specialist in year four



Implementation Successes

Living Real 1

Living Real is the Heart of HIV Care at TCHC

- Systematic outreach is integrated with Living Real Workshops
- Phone calls on Mondays to assess transportation needs
- Drop-off BART tickets in Oakland/Hayward on Tuesday
- Pick-up participants on Wednesdays
- Medical appointments/data collection actively integrated with every Living Real contact encounter
- Medical appointments scheduled
- Before and after Living Real sessions
- 5 Living Real Workshop Cycles Completed (Cycle 3 in Spanish)





Implementation Successes

Living Real 2

- Living Real = translation of sessions into knowledge & action
- Increase in HIV and trans health knowledge
 - Clients observed actively discussing knowledge gained in sessions with each other
- Certificate of Completion of all 16 sessions is encouragement and incentive for completion:
 - Shared sense of pride among participants
 - 20 graduates: 15/16 sessions
 - 29/47 BMP participants attended at least 1 session
 - 7 participants now working full time and maintaining their care
 - Only 1 working at entry

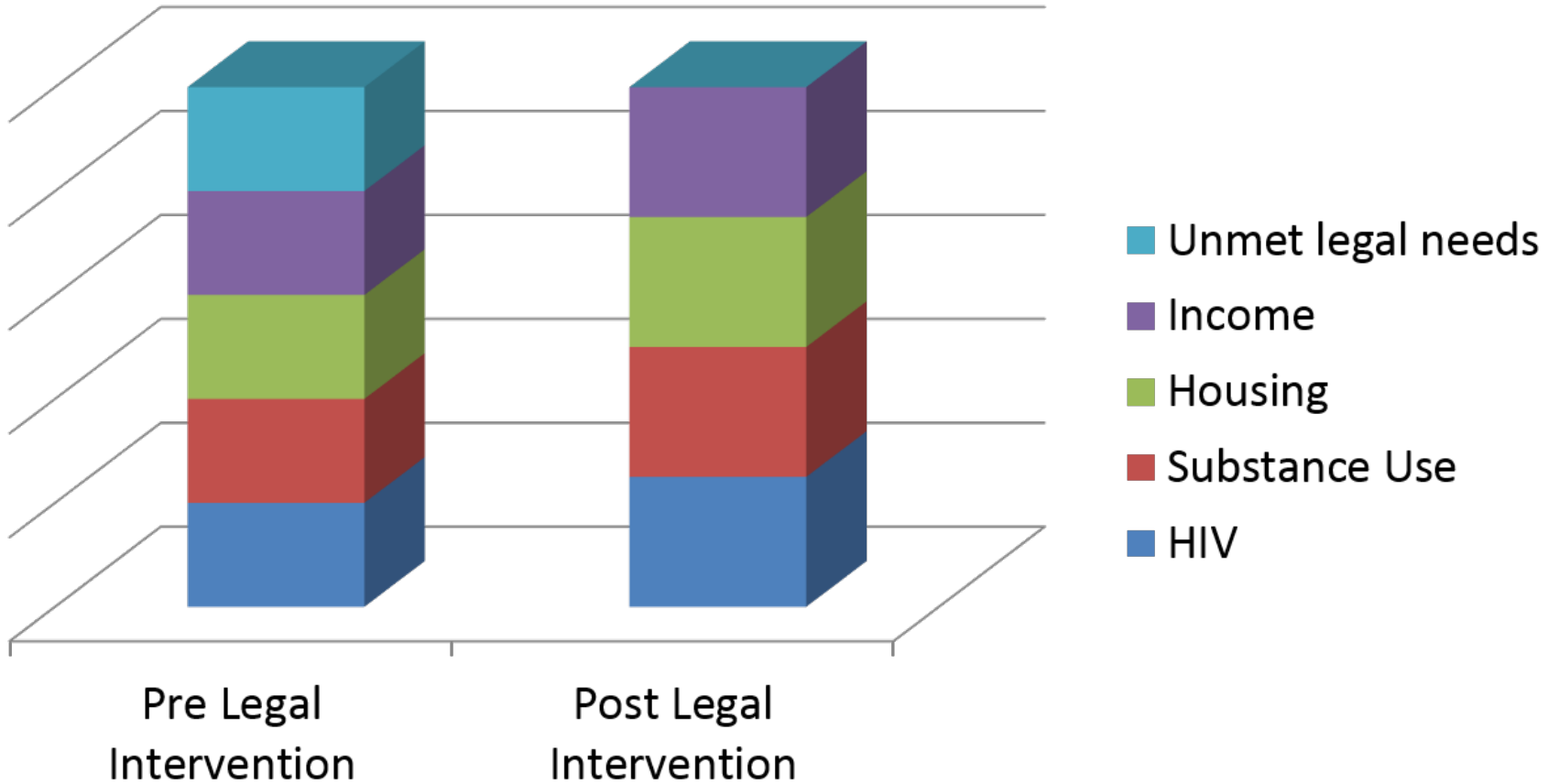


Implementation Successes

Legal Intervention

- 25 TWOC successfully accessing clinic
- 0% incarceration
- Utilization of legal services to resolve legal issues, not just going to court and paying fines
- Successful Expungement of felony records
 - increased housing and employment options
- Knowledge gained by Know Your Rights and Expungement workshops
 - helped participants make safer/smarter choices and increased quality of life opportunities
- Significantly more positive experiences with attorneys, courts, and the legal system
- Improvements have long term impacts on stability, indirectly impacting ability to maintain care

Challenges 1



CHALLENGE: HIV remains the lowest priority even when legal issues are resolved



Challenges 2

Retention Overall

- Lost contact with 12 BMP clients
- Most of the ongoing barriers are structural and require more substantial strategies than we can provide through this initiative

Barriers to Retention have been substantial

- Homelessness
- Substance use
- Incarceration
- Re-incarceration
- Leaving the county (SF/LA)
- Refusal to have us contact them, cell phone contact numbers not valid anymore

Recruitment /Retention of Latina Trans Women

- Low recruitment & enrollment of Latinas
- Challenges with maintaining regular contact
- Cell phone numbers/other contact information changes regularly
- Calls blocked by participants
- Regular testing has not yielded positives, only negatives, even from other counties.



Adaptations and Modifications

- Year 2: Per HRSA, changed enrollment into BMP from being a Tri-City client to open to any TWOC in or out of care in the Bay Area to increase enrollment
- Year 3: Decreased the Living Real Sessions from 24 sessions to 15 by combining some of the sessions
 - Feedback half way through cycle 1 from BMP staff/evaluator/facilitators suggest that several of the sessions could be collapsed from 2 to 1 and would be more feasible for clients to attend/complete, content combined, not repetitive
- Year 3: To increase referrals into the legal services intervention, we began having all new recruits complete a Legal Screener at time of enrollment. The screener ascertained information that the lawyer could use to determine if legal services would be useful for the participant. This screener was then provided to the legal liaison for consultation with the new enrolled participant
- Year 5: To increase enrollment, a \$25 enrollment incentive was offered to participants who successfully referred new participants



Lessons Learned

- Providing access to a range of legal support services can decrease institutional barriers to care
- Despite having access to health insurance and health care, transwomen living with HIV have competing needs far beyond those related to health that impact their HIV care engagement
- As demonstrated with the Brandy Martell Project, trans women of color face many daily, structural issues that even challenged the most experienced staff

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Services and care sites are needed that address instrumental needs for economic opportunities, education and legal services and are a start for improving HIV care outcomes among transwomen of color
- For organizations just beginning to work with the trans community, engaging with trans peer leaders for program development and input as well as hiring trans staff from the community is highly recommended to build trust and recruitment
- Consider creating a trans community advisory board to help guide organizationally



Sustainability and Barriers to Sustainability

- TCHC determined the main priority was finding trans specific funding that aligns with TCHC and funding that maintained employment of the Brandy Martell staff.
- TCHC and TransVision were awarded an Alameda County PrEP Navigation Grant for fiscal years, 2017-2018. This grant includes transgender women and will add to program sustainability and will support three BMP staff after Y5 ends.
- With HIV funding cuts nationally at the federal level, any intervention activities sustainability may come from available private foundations. As we are still early in dissemination activities and reporting, no funding has materialized due to evaluation results but we are hopeful.
- One of the primary barriers in finding intervention sustainable funding is the overall lack of transgender specific funding available. This is not just a regional problem, but a national problem.

Resources

- Tri-City Health Center: <http://www.tri-cityhealth.org/>
- TransVision: [Facebook page](#)
- UCSF Center of Excellence for Transgender Health: <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans>

Brandy Martell Project Staff

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